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OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

Letter dated 28 May 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the Framework for the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation adopted by the Third Meeting of Senior Officials of the six participating countries of the subregion, namely the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, which was held at Ulaanbaatar in September 1996 (see annex).

The Framework for the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation aims at promoting subregional cooperation to achieve environmentally sound and sustainable development in North-East Asia and as such constitutes a substantive input to the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21.

Since Mongolia was the host country of the above meeting, and in accordance with resolution 53/3 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific of 30 April 1997, I kindly request that the text of the present letter and its annex be distributed as an official United Nations document of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Jargalsaikhany ENKHSAIKHAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of
Mongolia to the United Nations

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ANNEX

Framework for the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation

1. The Senior Officials designated by the Governments of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation, hereinafter referred to as the Participating Parties, having met at their Third Meeting, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 17 to 20 September 1996, have agreed as follows:

1. General

1.1 The Participating Parties affirm their commitment to promote subregional cooperation to achieve environmentally sound and sustainable development in North-East Asia by actively and effectively promoting the North-East Asian Subregional Programme of Environmental Cooperation, as a follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development of 1992.

1.2 The Programme will be coordinated, to the extent possible, with other regional arrangements and activities of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to enhance the overall effectiveness of environmental cooperation in the subregion.

1.3 The Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, as adopted by the Conference, should continue to provide general policy guidance on subregional cooperation in North-East Asia.

2. Geographical coverage

2.1 The geographical scope of the Programme is defined as the areas under the jurisdiction of the following Participating Parties:

- China;
- Democratic People's Republic of Korea;
- Japan;
- Mongolia;
- Republic of Korea;
- Russian Federation.

2.2 Other Parties and relevant institutions that have an interest and commitment in furthering cooperation in North-East Asia may be invited to join in the Programme activities and provide financial support, as appropriate.

3. Programme objectives

3.1 The principal objective of the Programme is to promote subregional environmental cooperation and sustainable development efforts for enhancement of the quality of life and the well-being of present and future generations in accordance with the spirit of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

3.2 The activities under the Programme are intended to enhance the capacities of the Participating Parties in environmental management efforts through subregional cooperation. To facilitate the complete and effective participation of national institutions at all levels in sustainable development efforts, the activities of the Programme will be aimed primarily at strengthening their relevant technological and managerial capabilities.

3.3 It would be advantageous to have a step-by-step and practical approach towards this subregional cooperation and consolidate the results as the Programme develops in the future. That approach could be used as building blocks for strengthening subregional cooperation over time.

4. Senior Officials meeting on environmental cooperation in North-East Asia

4.1 The Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia will act as the Governing Body for the Programme. It will, accordingly, provide overall policy guidance as well as project coordination and management to the Programme.

4.2 The Meeting of Senior Officials will make all policy decisions concerning all substantive and financial matters related to the Programme and, in particular, will:

(a) Keep the Programme under constant review, with a view to identifying further areas of cooperation and project-related activities in a step-by-step approach;

(b) Review the progress in implementing the Programme and projects and evaluate the results achieved;

(c) Approve the budget and work plan of the Programme and projects;

(d) Attempt to formulate a common framework of policies on subregional and international environmental issues over time, on the basis of the Rio Declaration;

(e) Review the institutional and financial arrangements for the subregional cooperation and suggest appropriate mechanisms;

(f) Serve as a forum for sharing experience on policy matters, information exchange, consultation and stocktaking on activities which would promote environmental cooperation in North-East Asia.

4.3 The Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia will be held, in principle, annually in the country of one of the Participating Parties, on a rotating basis.

4.4 The Meeting will work towards practical institutional and financial arrangements for the Programme, as appropriate.

4.5 During the interim period, the support of the ESCAP secretariat to the Meeting of Senior Officials is requested in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank and other relevant institutions, pending the final decision on the future institutional and financial arrangements of the Programme.

5. Participation, coordination and management

5.1 Each Participating Party will designate national focal points whose responsibilities will, inter alia, be the following:

(a) To undertake routine work in connection with the relevant Programme activities;

(b) To act as official channels of communication between the institutions participating in the Programme, the Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia, the ESCAP secretariat and other collaborating agencies and institutions;

(c) To consult and provide guidance to the relevant national institutions in connection with the implementation of the approved projects;

(d) To collate and present information on the implementation of the approved projects and activities, as appropriate;

(e) To assist participating and collaborating institutions and international agencies in undertaking the implementation of the approved projects and activities.

5.2 The activities under the Programme will generally be executed by the secretariat. The Meeting of Senior Officials may also designate one or more agencies to assume overall responsibility for implementing any specific project. The secretariat and the designated agencies will accordingly develop project proposals and activities, including budgetary support requirements, seek funding support and present periodic reports, as desired.

5.3 The participating institutions (such as government agencies, research centres, laboratories, universities, etc.) will be designated by the Participating Parties to implement and carry out the relevant approved activities under the Programme.

5.4 Regional consultants and institutions will be used, to the extent possible, for the implementation of approved projects/activities.

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6. Collaborating agencies

6.1 The United Nations bodies and agencies such as ESCAP, UNDP and UNEP and multilateral financing institutions such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank are invited to assist in the implementation of the Programme, as their follow-up contribution to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in the North-East Asian subregion in accordance with chapter 38 of Agenda 21. Their technical, financial and managerial support will be sought on a continuing basis to further the work of the Programme. Other collaborating agencies will be invited as necessary.

7. Financial mechanism

7.1 Financial support for the activities of the Programme may be available from the following sources:

(a) Voluntary contributions from the Participating Parties in cash or in kind or both;

(b) Collaborating agencies on a project-funding basis;

(c) Contributions from bilateral and multilateral donors;

(d) The private sector on a project-funding basis;

(e) Other contributions.

7.2 The Meeting of Senior Officials on Environmental Cooperation in North-East Asia will strive to reach a consensus on establishing a trust fund, to be funded by donors, collaborating agencies and Participating Parties on a voluntary basis, to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the Programme over a longer time-frame.

8. Criteria for project/activity selection

8.1 Commonality of interests, contribution to capacity-building, priority setting by the countries themselves, the impact on environment and sustainable development efforts, tangible subregional environmental benefits, and cost-effectiveness will be the principal factors in the selection of projects for subregional cooperation.